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By Jon Ruhlen

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ST. PAUL - Two economic development projects here got a needed boost from a United States Department of Agriculture grant.

On Saturday the USDA awarded St. Paul \$93,625 that will be used for a water line project to the city's industrial park and to help create infrastructure for a proposed grocery store.

"By receiving this money this is going to help St. Paul create economic infrastructure in the community," said St. Paul mayor Rick Giefer.

Giefer said the city would have been able to come up with the money for the projects eventually, but "not as quick as we're going to now."

The expanded water line to the industrial park will help support industrial applications as well as provide fire prevention services in the area. Giefer said one business is already located there - Westhoff Interiors, which manufactures interiors for yachts.

The other portion of the grant will be used for infrastructure and a parking lot for the proposed grocery store. Renfro's Market, Altamont, has plans to open a second store in St. Paul.

The community actually received two grants in one. The \$52,125 for the water line and \$41,500 for the grocery store. The grant was a 70 percent grant, meaning that St. Paul is contributing \$32,805 to the projects.

The money is part of the USDA's Rural Development funding program. USDA Rural Development director for Kansas Chuck Banks said \$375,000 in total grant money was awarded to eight different projects in Kansas this year.

"This is one of the few programs that is grant only," Banks said. "It gives some good grant money to these communities that are working on creative economic development."

The turn-around time is relatively short for the Rural Development grants. St. Paul applied in January and received the grant award on Saturday.

"Chuck Banks and his staff were very helpful," Giefer said. "Rural Development (were) very good people to work with."